

Shopping with kids: When you have your own purse-onal shopper

It doesn't feel like that long ago that I looked forward to shopping alone. When our boys were little and shopping with children was complicated, I loved sneaking out for an hour or two to get errands run on my own.

Fast forward a few years and I came to find shopping with children much less stressful. It was actually kind of fun to explore the store together, even if it took longer and I ended up with many more snack foods in the cart than I had planned to buy.



But I've reached a whole new place in parenting. Today if I get to choose, I do not want to shop alone. I want to bring a child along. It's not just that I enjoy their company. It's also a huge burden to have to load the cart, bag my own apples, pile everything up on the checkout belt, and bag the groceries myself. I've become used to having a grocery

shopping partner who drags the seltzer water on and off the cart and stacks the boxes of frozen pancakes just so in some real-life Tetris game and then does all the bagging for me.

Our boys are 8 and 10 now, and they really know how to grocery shop.

So this weekend I let them spread their wings a bit. I took each of them on a shopping trip—and not just for groceries.

Leo and I went clothing shopping one day, and he went into fitting rooms himself—so mature.

Then Daniel and I went to exchange a purse my parents gave me for Christmas. It was a lovely purse, but it didn't have a long strap, and I like to be able to throw the strap across my body when I have both boys with me. So Daniel and I headed to the

store.

I told him that I was pretty sure I wanted a black purse, but he kept picking these beautiful bags to show me. And they weren't all black. One was gold, but it didn't have the right strap.

"Oh, this one is \$99, so you don't want it," he would say—clearly knowing me well. "But this one has all these pockets! Look at it. See how you could put things in here?"

The minutes ticked by as he handed me purse after purse. He wanted to know how much I would like to spend, whether I wanted a larger one or smaller one, how fancy it should be, and on and on and on. At first I kept picking purses that looked like the ones I've owned before, but he was so excited and interested that I started following his lead. Why not pick something a little different? It's not as if I'm some expert at purse shopping. I might be just as happy with the result if I gave him the run of the store and saw what we came home with. So I did.



In the end the one we picked seemed just right, even though—or maybe because—it wasn't black. It has lots of pockets and a pull-out insert in the middle. The photo doesn't do it justice. And it was \$30, and we were both satisfied with that.

Then we threw ourselves into picking a wallet to go inside. That took even longer, and when we couldn't find one he liked, we tried a second store.

"Do you want to go look at the toys while we're here?" I asked.

"No, we really need to find you a good wallet," he said.

So we stayed focused on our mission and we found one.

These boys. They're getting so big in so many ways, and I happily remember the

little toddlers and preschoolers they were. But as much as I loved that time, I also don't want to go back.

These ages right now? They're my favorite.

Right now, our sons are the most fascinating conversationalists.

They enjoy spending time with me.

And they might just be better at shopping than I am.